HOW TO MANAGE INFORMATION
TO BETTER PILOT FARMERS ORZANIZATIONS' SERVICES?

Cross-cutting tools

Getting better organized together

Improving the value of your products

Improving your farm management

Improving production

The fundamentals of advisory services

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

A farmer organization purpose is to fulfil its members' needs through the provision of services.

To run, a farmer organization relies on two bodies:

The elected members decide on the Orientations and the Strategy

General Assembly

Commissions

Board

Chairman

Manager

Executives

Field officer
Farmer advisors

The team implements the Services

Between the decision and the operation, there is a necessity of having a good information management and flow. The tools and methods that FOs are setting up to manage information form the **information system**.

An information system is defined according to three parameters:

GOALS
- To make decisions
- To steer a service
- To be accountable

THE TYPE OF INFORMATION
- Quantitative
- Qualitative

THE FLOW OF INFORMATION AND DEDICATED RESOURCES
- Feedback / dissemination
- Tools / media
- People involved

STEPS FOR MANAGING AN INFORMATION SYSTEM

1 CLARIFYING THE OBJECTIVE ACCORDING TO THE NEEDS

A farmer organization may want to collect information to:
- Help its members in making choices
- Get organized to collectively access a service: procurement, logistics, marketing…
- Create references and monitor the market to better advise members or defend their interests
- Assess members' satisfaction

According to its objective, the FO must identify the data needed, whether it is qualitative or quantitave data:

Agronomic data	Production volumes and sales	Products quality	Price / Margin	Financial situation of the FO	Opinion, needs

2 ORGANIZING THE COLLECTION OF INFORMATION
- Who collects the information: farmer advisors, field officers, elected members…
- How is this person identified? Is he/she trained? Paid?
- How often is the information collected? When is it collected?
- How is the information collected: telephone survey, field visits, meetings?
- What tools and medias are used to record and share the information: notebook, telephone, SMS, database…?
- How much does the data collection system cost, and who pays for it?

3 ANALYZING AND SYNTHESIZING THE INFORMATION

The information is compiled at the service or FO level, using registers/logs and/or computer database.

The information is then analyzed and synthesized to produce useful data for decision-making (trends overtime, geographical distribution…). It can be presented in simple, accessible tables and graphs.

4 DISSEMINATING THE INFORMATION FOR DECISION-MAKING

- **AT FARM LEVEL**

This is the case for market information services (e.g. SIEL in Madagascar), weather forecasts, pest alerts… The information is transmitted via several channels: SMS, email, public boards…

- **AT FARMER ORGANIZATION LEVEL**

The information analysis feeds services or FO's steering bodies at various occasions: technical meetings, Board meetings, commissions, general assembly. Teams report to elected members. Discussions based on these dashboards help to bring services' improvements, to develop itself… and to decide (sales, geographic deployment…) !

Madagascar – Training relay farmers in the use of smartphones

Madagascar – Bulletin board of the vegetables' economic information system (SIEL) of Ceffel

Burkina Faso – Steering committee for cowpea cooperatives

FUNDAMENTALS TO REMEMBER

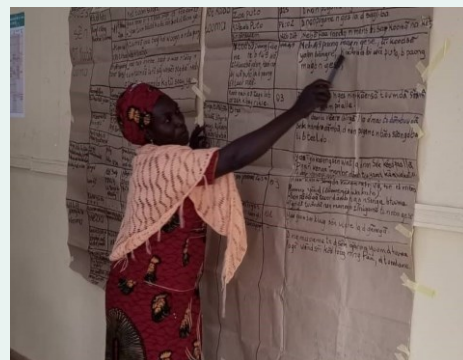| Set up a light information system that meets specific needs	Create a climate of trust within the FO to help agreeing on information sharing	Train the stakeholders involved in the system and ensure their commitment
• Collect relevant data in response to a need • Limit the volume of data to what is essential and easy to access • Use tools that are accessible at the grassroots level: notebooks, telephones or smartphones • Ensure rapid transmission of information for efficient decision-making	• Be transparent and clarify everyone's role, so that there are no doubts or concerns on the information shared within the FO • Use the written language to transmit information and to better control the reliability of the information. This can take the form of procedures or of commitment engagement	• Those who collect data: relay farmers, technicians • Those who analyze: to know how to interpret data and synthesize it into simple dashboards that can offer a clear view of the situation • Those who make decisions: to stay connected with their base and not only rely on dashboards, to be rigorous in the decision-making process

Useful, **U**sable, **U**sed information

WORDS OF FARMERS

"In our cooperative, we can't make a decision without consulting all the members. They have to see us, otherwise, even if the decision is formally voted on, it may not be implemented, and we won't have made any progress."

"Access to information is important for the Board. The technical team is responsible for preparing the discussions and mobilizing the necessary expertise. But the elected members must also stay informed themselves. This is their responsibility. They must know their sector and be in constant link with their base."

"The important thing is to know how to interpret information and make decisions based on the tools designed to help in this process."

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